

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents the review of theories and opinions about listening skills, listening tasks, and the language laboratory. At the end of these descriptions, the researcher presents the conceptual framework and the research questions.

A. Listening Skills

1. The Definition of Listening

Listening is a psychological process which begins with someone's awareness and attention to sounds or speech patterns (receiving), proceeds through identification and recognition of specific auditory signals (decoding), and ends in comprehension (understanding) (Smaldino, 2008: 293). In the receiving process, the ears will hear any sounds that come to them. At the same time, the ears can receive many sounds such as one's talk, rainfall, music, etc. However, they are able to select specific sounds that they will listen to. This process is called decoding. The specific sounds that are perceived by the ears then are transmitted to the brain. Finally, the brain will assign the meaning of the sounds. This process is called understanding.

Sounds refer to a sensation detected by the ear, caused by the ear vibration of the air surrounding it. In English, sounds are exemplified; in words, in contrasted words, and in sentences. For example, the sound of 's' in "see" will be different from the sound of "ʃ" in "she."

Speech patterns refer to an arrangement of words or parts of words and sentences. Speech patterns in English consist of stresses and intonation. For example, the sentence “Did Tony buy that black car?” will have different stresses and intonation for different meanings.

Identification is the process of identifying something, while recognition is the action of recognizing something. In the psychological process of listening, the auditory signals will be identified and recognized after the sounds come to the ears. Auditory signals refer to sounds intended as a message that is received by the auditory nerve, a part of the inner ear that reacts against the electrical impulses and transmits a signal to the brain.

Comprehension is the power of understanding. After the auditory signals are identified and recognized by the brain, they are assigned meaning. For example, when the listener hears the utterance “Would you like to come to my house?”, he or she determines that it is an invitation.

2. The Process of Listening

Listening is not a one-way street in which the process is merely an unidirectional receiving of audible symbols, but the process involves eight steps (Brown, 2001: 249). The eight steps are raw speech, hearer’s determination of speech type, hearer’s inference, hearer’s recall, hearer’s literal meaning assignment, hearer’s intended meaning assignment, hearer’s determination, and hearer’s message deletion.

Raw speech means that the hearer holds an image in the short-term memory. The image can be in the form of phrases, clauses, cohesive markers,

intonation, and stress patterns. The holding of the image is done naturally so that this process is called raw speech.

Hearer's determination of a speech type means that the hearer determines which speech type will be processed. This process is done by the ears to select one of the sounds received. The sound selected is then appropriately interpreted by the hearer.

In the process of hearer's inference, the hearer tries to infer the speaker's intention. The inference can be done through the consideration of the type of speech events, the context, and the content. For example, one determines whether the speaker wishes to persuade, to request, to deny, to inform, and so forth.

The hearer's recall means that he or she recalls the background information which is relevant to the particular context and subject matter. The success of the process is affected by the hearer's experiences and knowledge. His or her experience or knowledge is used to perform cognitive associations in order to bring a plausible interpretation to the message.

Then, the process is continued by the hearer's literal meaning assignment. It means that the hearer interprets the surface strings that he or she perceives. This process may take on a peripheral role in cases where literal meanings are irrelevant to the message.

The next step is the hearer's intended meaning assignment. In this process, the hearer matches the perceived and intended meaning. For example, when he receives a message, "Do you have the time?", it does not mean that he or she will respond "yes" or "not" but, "It is a quarter to nine."

After the hearer assigns the intended meaning, he or she will determine whether the information should be retained in the short-term memory or long-term memory. He or she will retain it as a short-term memory if the context is for a quick oral response. On the other hand, he or she will keep it as a long-term memory if the context is for a long processing information such as in a lecture.

The last process from this view is the hearer's deletion. In this process, the hearer will delete the useless message and forget it quickly. Meanwhile, the important information is retained.

It can be concluded that listening is the process of receiving sounds, selecting specific sounds, assigning meaning, and deleting useless information. Listening is an interactive process that involves the ears and the brain.

2. The Definition of Skill

A skill refers to the ability to do something well (Hornby 1995: 1109). For example, if someone wants to be able to drive, he or she has to have driving skills. These skills include the abilities to make the gear well, to handle the steering wheel, to handle the car when something unexpected happens on the road suddenly, and others that make driving run well.

One's skills involve part(s) of the body such as the brain, hand and/or finger, tongue and tip, legs, ears, and so on. For instance, a carpenter needs a skill that involves hands, or a pianist needs a skill that involves the brain and fingers.

In the context of language teaching, a skill refers to one's language performance (Brown, 2001: 232). One's language performance is divided into two forms, namely productive performance and receptive performance. In

English, productive performances include speaking and writing skills while receptive performances include listening and reading skills.

3. The Definition of Listening Skill

From the definition of listening and the definition of skill, it can be concluded that a listening skill is the ability to receive any sounds, to select the specific sounds that will be listened to, and to assign the meaning of the specific sounds. This ability involves two main parts of the body: the ears and the brain. The ears are to receive and select the sounds and the brain is to assign the meaning of the sounds.

4. Types of Listening Skills

Based on the purpose of listening, listening skills are divided into six types (Harmer 2001: 201-202). They are identifying topics, predicting and guessing, listening for general understanding, listening for specific information, listening for detailed information, and interpreting texts.

The first skill is identifying the topic. In this skill, the listeners are able to decide what the text they hear is about. This skill allows them to process the text effectively. The following is an example of identifying a topic.

*The students hear a text and a question based on the text.
Andrew was very busy last week. He wrote some letters for his parents and friends on Monday. On Tuesday, he visited Budi's school. He played tennis for two hours there. In the evening, he went to the sportshop. He bought a new tennis racket. Then he played tennis again the whole day on Wednesday. He stayed home in the evening. He was very tired.*

“What is the topic of the text?” → identifying the topic

(Madya & Djunaedi, 2001: 20)

The second skill is predicting and guessing. In this skill, the listeners are required to understand what is being talked about after they have identified the topic. This skill allows them to make assumption or guess the content of the text from their half-hearing. The exercise below shows the skill of predicting and guessing.

*They came with their tanks and their planes
With ravaging fiery flames
And nothing remains
Just a voice rising up in the smoky haze*

*We will not go down
In the night, without a fight
You can burn up our mosques and our homes and our schools
But our spirit will never die
We will not go down
In Gaza tonight*

Can you guess what is the title of the song?

(www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/m/michael_heart/#share)

The third skill is listening for general understanding. In this skill, the listeners are able to understand the text they listen to in general without noting every word in the text. This skill further helps them listen for specific information.

For example:

Season in the Sun
*Good bye to you my trusted friends
We've known each other since
we were nine or ten
Together we climbed hills and trees
Learned of love and BC's
Skinned our hearts and skinned our knees
Goodbye my friends it's hard to die
When all the birds are singing in the sky*

In general, what does the song tell you about?

(www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics)

The fourth skill is listening for specific information. In this skill, the listeners will concentrate on a particular item that attracts them. This skill will help them find the specific item they are looking for. The following is an example of listening for specific information.

Mrs. Galloway: Hello.

Ruth : Can I speak to Eryn?

Mrs. Galloway: Is that Ruth?

Ruth : Yes. Hello Mrs Galloway. Is Eryn there?

Mrs. Galloway: No, Ruth, sorry. She's at the cinema with her sisters.

Ruth : Oh. Well, could you ask her to bring my copy of Romeo and Juliet to college tomorrow?

Who wants to speak to Eryn?

(Harmer, 2001: 236)

The fifth skill is listening for detailed information. In this skill, the listeners try to understand the text by listening to it in detail. For example, when they hear an announcement in an airport, they listen in a concentrated way to everything that is said.

Whitley Strieber and the aliens

And then there was the story of the home-loving dad who claims he was experimented on by space alien scientist. Human guinea pig Whitley Strieber suffered a terrifying brain examination as he lay naked inside the hi-tech surgery of the cruel creatures' spacecraft...

"I had been captured like a wild animal and it was like they were trying to tame me," said the 41-year-old. "They performed bizarre medical procedures on me and inserted a thin metal instrument into my brain..."

The students are asked to write the detail of the alien about its description, sound, movement, etc.

(Harmer, 2001: 237)

The last skill is interpreting texts. In this skill, the listeners are able to see beyond the literal meaning of words in a passage, using a variety of clues to understand what the speaker is implying or suggesting. For example, when the lecturer says, “You’re in a non-smoking zone area,” he or she is asking the students to throw away their cigarettes.

4. The Process of Listening Skills in Language Learning

There are two kinds of processes involved in understanding a spoken discourse. These are often referred to as *bottom-up* and *top-down* processing of listening (Richards, 2008: 4).

Bottom-up processing refers to using an incoming input as the basis for understanding a message (Richards, 2008; Morley in Murcia, 2001). It means that language processing involves the listener who plays close attention to every detail of the language input. By understanding the input in details, he or she then comprehends the message.

Bottom-up processing, in other words, means that phonemic units are decided and linked together to form words, words are linked together to form phrases, phrases are linked together to form utterances, and utterances are linked together to form complete meaningful texts (Nunan, 1999: 200).

The following exercise practices listening for word stresses as a marker of the information focus of a sentence. Students listen to questions that have two possible information focuses and use stresses to identify the appropriate focus. (Words in italic are stressed.)

| Students check | Students hear information focus | |
|--|---------------------------------|------|
| Bank's <i>downtown</i> branch is closed today. | Where | When |
| Is the city office open on <i>Sunday</i> ? | Where | When |
| I'm going to the <i>museum</i> today. | Where | When |

(Richards, 2008: 6)

Top-down processing means that the listener actively constructs (or more accurately, reconstructs) the original meaning of the speaker using incoming sounds as clues (Nunan, 1999: 201). In this reconstruction process, he or she uses prior knowledge of the context and situation within which listening takes place to make sense of what he or she hears (Nunan, 1999; Morley in Murcia 2001; Richards, 2008).

Below is an example of top-down processing. This example is about the meaning of the expression "Good luck!" and how its meaning would differ if it is said as a response to each of the following statements:

1. I'm going to the casino.
2. I'm going to the dentist.
3. I'm going to a job interview.

The meaning of "good luck" differs according to the situation. It mentally refers to and according to the background knowledge it brings to each situation when it is used.

5. The Importance of Listening Skills

As explained in the definitions of listening, skill, and listening skill, it can be concluded that listening skills give a great contribution in the language classroom. It is because they provide input for the learner's language acquisition

(Rost, 1994: 141-142). In a spoken language, a learner must interact with others to achieve understanding. In this interaction, he or she must pay attention to the other's language. The understanding of the language spoken by the other people is an input for him/her to acquire good speaking habits (Harmer 2001: 228).

Furthermore, having listening skills enable the learners to think ahead while receiving the message and use the time differential to organize and internalize the information so they can comprehend it (Smaldino 2008: 294). As a result, he or she will be successful in the communication process. In other words, listening skills are important inputs for acquiring speaking skills.

B. Varied Listening Tasks

1. The Definition of Task

A task is a piece of classroom work that involves a learner in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language (Nunan, 2004: 4). The classroom work can be in the form of individual work, pair work, or group work (Harmer 2001: 114). In this activity, students are encouraged to improve their skills actively.

Comprehending means that the work or exercise given by the teacher is aimed at improving the students' understanding of the language. For instance, the teacher gives an exercise about a recount text. It means that the exercise is aimed at improving students' understanding about the recount text which involves the purpose, the generic structure, and the language features of the text.

Manipulating refers to controlling or handling something with skills. It means that the exercise given by the teacher is set to improve students' certain

skills. For example, when the teacher gives a text and asks the students to read and to find out the specific information from the text, he or she wants to improve students' skills of skimming.

Producing refers to creating something using skills (Hornby, 1995: 923). For instance, students are asked to write a descriptive text. In this exercise, they use their writing skills where finally they can produce a text which has cohesion and coherence.

Interacting means that the learners can use the language in communication. For example, after they listen to a dialogue on the telephone, they can practice it with their friends in the class. Finally, they can use the language in their real lives.

A task is also definite as a work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically. It aims to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed (Ellis in Nunan, 2004: 3).

A task is also defined as a range of work plans which have the overall purposes of facilitating language learning – from the simple and brief exercise type to the more complex and lengthy activities such as group problem-solving or simulations and decision making (Breen cited in Nunan, 2004: 3).

From some definitions above, it can be summarized that a task is a piece of work which is aimed at achieving students' understanding in language learning. Their understanding achievement will be attained by doing work, from the simple work to the most complicated one.

2. The Definition of a Listening Task

A listening task is a piece of classroom work that is aimed at processing a spoken discourse for a functional purpose through listening to and doing something with the information received (Morley in Murcia, 2001: 71). It is aimed at processing a spoken discourse because it is as an input for the speaking skill. The functional purpose of the spoken discourse is such as asking for help, giving information, and others

3. The Definition of Varied Listening Tasks

The word ‘varied’ means different types (Hornby, 1995: 1320). Varied listening tasks mean different types of classroom works which are aimed at processing spoken discourses for a functional purpose through listening. There are six types of listening tasks (Willis, 1996: 149-154). All of them give the outcome, analyze the process involved, suggest specific starting points, and give examples. They cover listing, ordering and sorting, comparing, problem solving, sharing personal experiences, and doing creative tasks.

The first type is listing. The outcome of this task is a completed list of a text. The processes involved in this task are brainstorming and fact finding. The starting points are words, things, people, places, and actions. Examples of this task are personal characteristics such as TV celebrities, qualities needed for particular jobs, ways of doing things, etc. The exercise below shows a task of the listing type.

I get a new friend. Her name is Aulia. I met her in my classmate's house, Metha. She is her cousin. Aulia is twelve years old. She has twin sister. Her name is Ananda. Both of them are smart and beautiful, they can sing

carefully. They are also good at playing music instruments, especially piano.

Describe the writer's new friend.

(Kistono et al, 2004)

The second type is ordering and sorting. The outcome of this task is a set of information or data that have been ordered and sorted according to specified criteria. The processes involved in this task are sequencing, ranking, categorizing, and classifying. The starting points are jumbled lists, personal experiences of something, uncompleted tables or charts, and lists of items. An example of this task type is ordering the instructions for making an international phone call and ranking some items in order.

Order the sentences you will hear into a good dialogue of making a telephone call.

1. *Who would you like to speak to?*
 2. *What is the number?*
 3. *I'd like to speak to Mr. Aswad.*
 4. *Yes, I'd like make a phone call.*
 5. *Could you spell ASWAD?*
 6. *0411 235 490*
 7. *Hello, can I help you?*
 8. *Would you like to go booth 5?*
 9. *Certainly, A-S-W-A-D.*
- The best arrangement is.....

(Willis, 1996; Brata, 2009)

The third type is comparing. The outcome of this task is varied, depending on the task goal. The processes involved in this task can be matching, finding similarities, or finding differences. The starting points are some pieces of information from two different types of sources (visual and texts) that can be matched in order to identify someone or something or two sets of information on common themes. The example of the task below are matching texts to the pictures and finding similarities in news reports.



What is the man doing?

The students will hear four possible answers as the following.

- a. He is writing a message*
- b. He is speaking on the telephone*
- c. He is angry with his staff*
- d. He is reading a letter*

(Nunan, 2004: 197)

The fourth type is problem solving. The outcome of this task is the solution to a problem which can then be evaluated. The processes involved in this task are analyzing real situations, reasoning, and decision making. The starting points are short puzzles, real life problems, incomplete stories, and case studies. The example of this task is the way an old lady crosses the river.

An old lady wants to cross the river with a wolf, a goat, and a cabbage. She only has a small boat and can only take two things at a time with her. How does she do it?

(Willis, 1996: 84)

The fifth type is sharing personal experiences. The outcome is being sociable or entertaining or hoping to know others better. The processes involved in this task are narrating; describing; exploring; and explaining attitudes, opinions, or reactions. The starting points can be anecdotes, personal reminiscences, or personal reactions about something. The example of this task is one's past experience.

On Sunday I went downtown to do some shopping. Then I went to a restaurant for lunch. I ate lunch and asked for the check. But I found I didn't have enough money. How embarrassing! So what must I do? First I called my parents, but they were out. After that, I tried to call my roommate, but he was out too. So finally I phoned my boss at home. He was very nice and brought me some money. What did the writer's boss do after he phoned him?

(Brata, 2009: 17)

The sixth type is doing creative tasks. The processes involved in this task are brainstorming, fact-finding, ordering and sorting, comparing, and many others. The starting points can be children's activities, creative writing, social investigations, or real-life rehearsals. The example of this task is listening to a song and completing the song lyrics.

Task 1 – Complete the blank part of this song below.

Season in the Sun

Good bye to you my trusted friends

We've known each other since

we _____¹⁾ nine or ten

Together we _____²⁾ hills and trees

Learned of love and ABC's

Skinned our hearts and _____³⁾ our knees

Good bye my friends it's hard to die

When all the birds are singing in the sky

Now that spring is in the air

Pretty girls are every where

Think of me and all be there

*We had joy we had fun

(www.youtube.com/lyrics)

4. The Advantages of Listening Tasks

Providing listening tasks makes students do something with the information they have extracted from texts. Activities of listening tasks such as labeling (e.g. building on a map), selecting (e.g. choosing a film from three trailers), form filling (e.g. hotel registration forms), etc., make the students

connect their academic materials with their real lives. In addition, they also provide a more reliable way of checking understanding (Field in Richards & Renandya, 2002: 237).

Another benefit of listening tasks is that they can keep extraneous reading or writing in minimum and demand individual responses. Filling in forms, labelling diagrams, or making choices obliges every learner to try to make something of what he or she hears.

In addition, listening tasks will help learners develop cognitive and metacognitive language learning strategies. It means that listening tasks will guide them toward personal intellectual involvement in their own learning (Morley in Murcia, 2001: 72)

Further, linking listening tasks to speaking provides opportunities for students to notice how language is used in different communicative contexts. They can then practice using some of the language expressions that occur in the listening texts (Richards, 2008).

C. Language Laboratory

1. The Definition of Language Laboratory

A language laboratory is a room containing special equipment to help students learn languages (Hornby, 1995: 662). The equipment includes ten or twenty booths which are equipped with electrical instruments such as tape decks, headphones, microphones, and computer sets (Harmer, 2001: 141). The technology is set in such a way that students can work on their own, can be paired or grouped with other students, or can interact in a one-to-one basis with the

teacher. The language laboratory consists of two groups of equipment, namely a teacher's console and students' booths. Figure I shows the picture of a language laboratory.

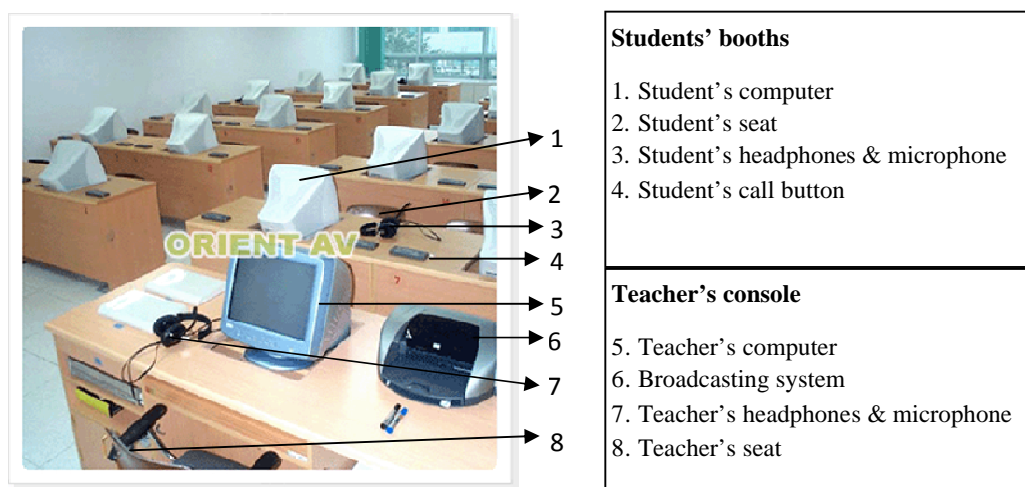


Figure I: **Language laboratory** (www.orientav.co.kr/product)

a. Teacher's console

A console is a panel for the switches and controls of electronic or mechanical equipment. A teacher's console is equipped with a broadcasting system which is used to manage the teacher and students' talks. For instance, if the teacher wants to talk with the student sitting in the seat number 21, the teacher presses the button number 21.

In addition, the teacher's console is equipped with a computer set, a headphone set, and a microphone. The teacher's computer can be used for monitoring students' on-screen work and activities.

b. Students' booths

Booths are small enclosed spaces in which computer sets are placed. There are generally ten to twenty booths in a language laboratory (Harmer, 2001: 141). In a modern laboratory, booths are equipped with headphones, microphones, and tape decks.

A headphone set is an apparatus that fits over the ears and used for listening. A microphone is an instrument that changes sound waves into electrical currents. It is used especially in recording or broadcasting speech, music, and many other activities. A tape deck is a machine for recording sounds on tape, usually as one component in a high-frequency system.

2. Kinds of Language Laboratory

There are three kinds of language laboratories (Wilson and Thayalan, 2007: 3). They are conventional laboratories, lingua-phone laboratories, and Computer Assisted Language Laboratories (CALL).

a. Conventional Laboratory

A conventional laboratory is the simplest form of the language laboratory. It has a tape recorder and a few audiocassettes of the target language to teach the learners. The teacher plays back the tape and the learners listen to it and learn the material. As it is used in a normal classroom setup, it is prone to distractions and this type of laboratories is no longer common.

b. Lingua-Phone Laboratory

A lingua-phone laboratory is also a conventional laboratory, with a little modernization. Learners are given a headset to listen to the audiocassettes being

played back. Compared with the conventional laboratory, the distractions in this laboratory are minimized and a certain amount of clarity in listening is possible.

There is also a modernized lingua-phone laboratory available today, which uses an electronic device that has two functions. It works as a cassette player with all the features of a normal cassette player on the left side and as a repeater on the right side that helps one record one's voice and plays it back for comparison.

c. Computer Assisted Language Laboratory (CALL)

There are two types of this laboratory: Computer Assisted Language Laboratory (CALL) and Web Assisted Language Laboratories (WALL). CALL uses the computer to teach language. The language course materials are already fed into the computer and are displayed according to the features available in the system.

WALL is like CALL. The difference is that WALL provides computers with a connection to the internet. In WALL, both teacher and students can browse any resources from the internet during the teaching learning process.

3. The Use of Language Laboratory

A language laboratory can be used for teaching or learning through a teacher's console (Madhavi, 2009: 4). The functions of a teacher's console are staying in control, reinforcing learning, teaching with software that is approachable, and ensuring the best learning results.

a. Staying in Control

Staying in control includes various activities. Some of these are controlling web browsing; managing chat sessions; monitoring students' on-

screen work and activities; blacking out screens; locking cursors and keyboards to focus attention on a given task; shutting down, logging off, or restarting student computer sets; etc.

b. Reinforcing Learning

In reinforcing learning, teachers can use communication tools that are familiar for their students, such as text messaging or chatting. They can also communicate with them in an engaging way and by creating more opportunities to interact in the target language. Learners can reinforce their language in various activities. They can revise pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, sentence structures, and conversations.

c. Teaching with Software that is Approachable

Approachable software is one with which teachers will be perfectly at ease in their teaching activities. It is used as the interfaces which are user-friendly and activity-driven. Activities that are not in use cannot be accidentally selected, such as confusing the teacher and disrupting the lesson. No specialized Instructional Technology (IT) skills are needed in the comfortable teaching and learning environment provided by the interface.

d. Ensuring the Best Learning Result

The best learning result can be reinforced by the existence of a language learning software. The language learning software gives learners access to resources for independent or supplemental learning and study. This unique learning-on-demand feature creates additional learning opportunities and

reinforces classroom activities. It is possible to conduct tests, practice tests, and get results in individualized manners.

For those four functions, the teacher can easily operate the teacher's computer set and control all the students' computer sets. If the teacher wants to talk to one of the students, he or she just presses the number of the student's booth. On the other hand, if a student wants to ask questions to the teacher, he or she just presses the call button. In addition, the teacher can control all the computer sets to show films, texts, pictures, and others. If the students' headphones are broken and cannot be used, the teacher can use the room speaker.

4. The Advantages and Disadvantages of the Language Laboratory

A language laboratory gives both advantages and disadvantages to the English teaching-learning process. These are described below.

a. The Advantages of the Language Laboratory

Language laboratories offer special advantages which make a welcome addition to any school's resources (Harmer, 2001: 142-143). There are four special advantages of the existence of the language laboratory. The advantages are based on the special equipment offered in the language laboratory.

The first advantage is comparing. For example, the double track allows students to compare the way they say things with the correct pronunciation on a source tape. They can monitor and get feedback on their own performance, even without the intervention of the teacher.

The second advantage is privacy. The students can talk to each other, record onto the tape, wind and rewind tapes, or type on the computer keyboards

without disturbing other students. They can also ask the teacher without being known by other students.

The third advantage is individual attention. When the teacher wants to speak to individual students in a laboratory, the students can do so from the console. Unlike situation in the classroom, in a laboratory all the other students are working away on their own. The attention that teachers give to one student does not distract the others.

The fourth advantage is learner motivation. The language laboratory helps to motivate some students to really listen to what they say and how they say it. It also offers a good half-way house between a teacher's control and learner's autonomy since, although students work at their own pace, they are more open to the guidance of the teacher.

b. The Disadvantages of the Language Laboratory

Although there are many advantages of the language laboratory, there are also some disadvantages of it. The disadvantages are that it needs high cost, it makes unsuccessful instruction in some cases, and it needs skilled instructors.

First, it needs high cost to build a language laboratory in the school and to keep it on going. In addition, it needs more money for the electric bill.

Second, it sometimes does not make the English teaching-learning process successful if there are some troubles with the technology in the language laboratory. Worse even, it becomes useless when the electricity is off.

Third, the language laboratory needs a skilled instructor to be able to operate all the technology provided in the language laboratory. The school also

has to employ technicians who will keep the equipment in the language laboratory always in a good condition.

5. Steps for Improving Listening in the Language Laboratory

The earphones and headphones which are provided in the language laboratory deliver undistorted sounds directly to the ears. Listening is better practiced in a language laboratory with the help of headphones and earphones; this provides ideal conditions for intensive listening. There are six stages that can be done to improve students' listening skills in the language laboratory. These are understanding the setting, pre-teaching unfamiliar English words, focusing on listening, comprehending, analyzing, and giving graded listening tasks (Madhavi, 2009: 7-8).

a. Understanding the Setting

After the first listening, students should be able to understand the setting of the recording. This encourages students to think about the setting so that they can go on to speculate about the contents of what the speakers say or will say. This first listening allows the students to get accustomed to the voices.

b. Pre-teaching Unfamiliar English Words

Teaching isolated and meaningless lists of words and phrases is probably not a good idea. Teachers may choose to introduce the setting before the students listen. This provides an opportunity to elicit or introduce and explain the sort of language that might be heard in that setting. This language is listed on the board and students listen and mark what they actually hear.

c. Focusing on Listening

Listening tasks should give the students a reason for listening and focus on their attention. These listening tasks should be set before the students listen. This intense listening requires intense concentration. Therefore the listening task can be limited for ten to fifteen minutes.

d. Comprehending

Large classes will probably have different levels of comprehension. There is no reason why all the students need to work on the same task. Equally, if a teacher gives students more than six questions, groups of students can be given questions 1-5, questions 6-10 and so on. After listening students share their answers for comprehension.

e. Analyzing

After students have understood the gist and some important details of a recording, they can analyze objects in more detail and investigate the way in which the speakers have expressed the ideas. Analysis of the speed and style of speech, the use of hesitation, repetition, false starts, paraphrasing, and so on can also be practiced.

f. Giving Graded Listening Tasks

Teachers teach listening by building up comprehension from understanding generally to identifying specific information. They can also grade the listening tasks from easy to more difficult by the forms of the questions. They use and evaluate them based on the kind of output by the learners in the form of writing or speaking.

D. Language Laboratory of SMP N 2 Yogyakarta

SMP N 2 Yogyakarta has a language laboratory. It is located on the second floor beside the computer laboratory. Its location is favourable because it is far from the classroom and the situation is quiet.

The language laboratory of SMP N 2 Yogyakarta has twenty booths and forty seats for the students. There are twenty computer sets so one computer set is for two students. The laboratory is completed by two air conditioners, two whiteboards, and two room speakers.

The teacher's console has a computer set, a headphone set, a microphone, and a broadcasting system. According to the kinds of language laboratory, the language laboratory of SMP N 2 Yogyakarta is classified as the Computer Assisted Language Laboratory (CALL). The laboratory is not connected to the internet.

E. Conceptual Framework

The implementation of varied listening tasks in the language laboratory will enable students to be more interested in developing their listening skills. There are special equipments in the language laboratory that enable them to train themselves. The special equipments will give students chances to develop their listening skills by listening to the spoken text, recording on to the tape, and talking to each other. They can also monitor and get feedback on their own performance, even without the intervention of the teacher. They can also ask the teacher without being known by other students.

Further, the use of varied listening tasks also gives many advantages. Varied listening tasks enable students to connect their academic studies with their real life situation. By making these connections, students understand the meaning in their schoolwork, and then they can acquire and retain their knowledge and skills. It is hoped that by using varied listening tasks, students' listening skills can be developed.

In addition, varied listening tasks will enable students to check their understanding of the material given by the teacher. By this understanding, they can retain and develop their skills. Then further, they can keep extraneous reading or writing at the minimum. Besides, the benefit of listening tasks is that tasks demand individual responses so that every student can make something of what he or she hears.

Figure II summarizes the conceptual framework of this study. In this figure, it is shown that the students' listening skill is expected to improve by the use of varied listening tasks in the language laboratory. The expectation is based on the consideration of the advantages of varied listening tasks and language laboratory. Varied listening tasks can be used to connect tasks with real situation, to improve material understanding, and to encourage individual responses. The language laboratory provides comparison, privacy, and individual's attention.

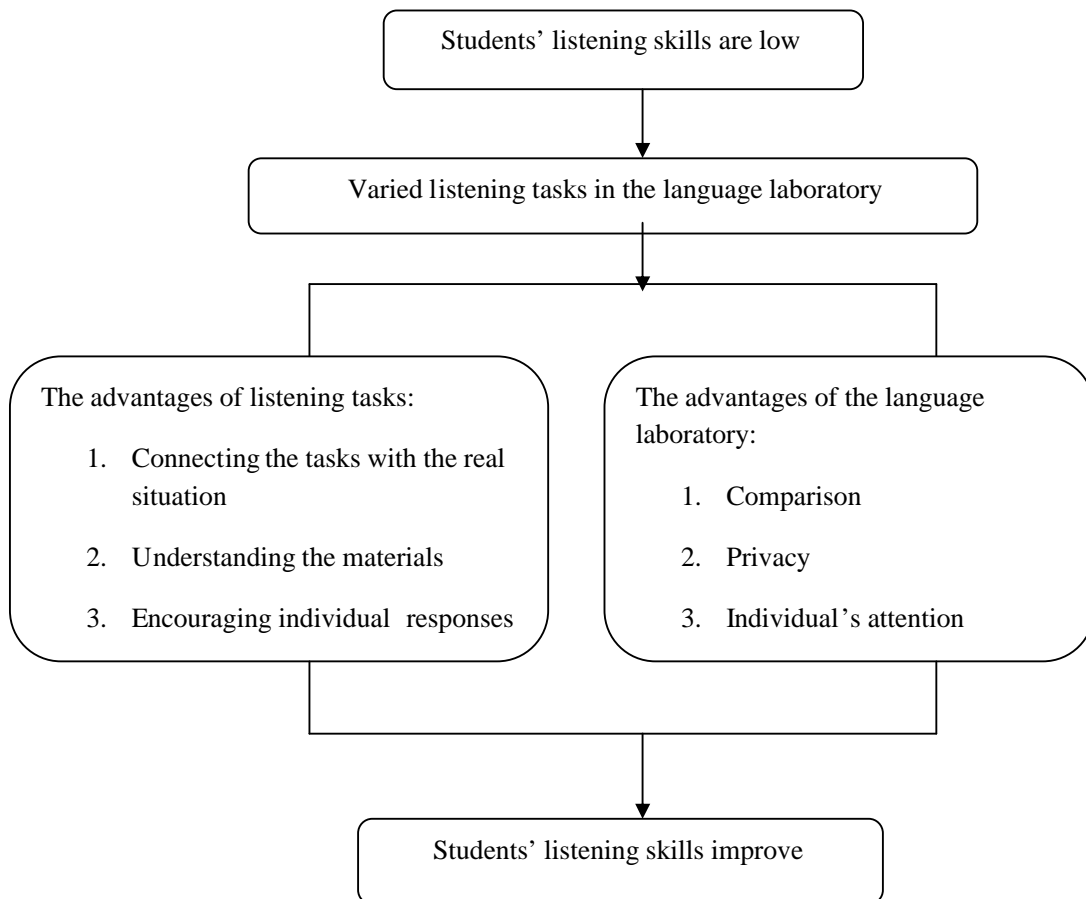


Figure II: **The conceptual framework**

E. Research Questions

Based on the background of the study in Chapter I and supported with the theories in Chapter II, the researcher can plan the possible action to solve the problem found. In this study, the problem is the low competencies of students' listening skills in the eight grade of SMP N 2 Yogyakarta. To solve the problem, the researcher needs to plan the actions. The action plan that is applied is giving varied listening tasks in the language laboratory.

In planning the actions, the researcher needs to formulate the questions to help her in presenting the report in Chapter IV. The questions are:

1. What are the action plans conducted by the researcher?
2. How does the researcher use varied listening tasks in the language laboratory?
3. How do the students' listening skills improve?